

## Staff Empowerment as a Tool for Increasing Organizational Performance: A Study of Non-Academic Junior Staff in Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the influence of staff empowerment on organizational performance. The research design was descriptive survey to investigate and observed the influence of staff empowerment on organizational performance. It is of utmost importance for the institution management to empower junior staff in their institution since this have not only been served as a motivational tool but also as a strategy to improve work performance. Findings from the research shows that employees empowerment helps in workers retention, workers motivation and serves as performance booster in the organization. The study find out that this strategy has helped many organizations to improve their performance by delegating functions, entrusting, trusting and giving power and authority to employees to take certain decision as regards to their work, so as to improve their performance. Sequel to the above, it is very important for this institution to ensure that it provides environment that promote employees empowerment and policies that guide this strategy. Some recommendations were put forward to resolve the issues of the research.

**Keywords--** Empowerment, Employees, Performance

### I. INTRODUCTION

Employee empowerment has engaged the attention of both academics and practitioners following the change in employment relationship in the last decade. Due to the competitive conditions, which have increased due to industrialization and globalization, have rapidly attributed more significance to human resources from the point of organizations. Organizations have placed humans at the centre of their structures, and more effective and efficient ways of benefitting from human resources have been sought

by developing various strategies. Thus, Organizations have seen the need to follow contemporary management approaches such as "empowerment". In this era of globalization there is need for employees' empowerment in organisation so that employees will be in position to make swift decision and respond quickly to any changes in the environment. According to Nick et al., (1994) Organisation that are committed to employee empowerment they are in a position to motivate and retain their employees, although it's a complex management tool which needs to be nurtured and handled with a lot of care. Vecchio, (1995) posited that empowerment is a motivational technique that is designed to improve performance if managed properly through increased levels of employee's participation and self determination. Employee empowerment is concerned with trust, motivation, decision-making, and breaking the inner boundaries between management and employees as "them" versus us (Yehuda, 1998). Employee empowerment will lead to improving productivity, performance and job satisfaction (Nick et al., 1994). Employee empowerment has been associated with the concept of power, implying that power in organisation should be re-shared from the top management to the lower management (Tulloch, 1993). In a free market economy where there is open competition, challenges to provide quality product and services, high degree of innovativeness and turbulent changes in the macro-environment, employee empowerment is needed. The employee empowerment literature highlights that empowered workforce will lead to achieving a competitive advantage (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Forrester, 2000; Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997; Sundbo, 1999; Thomas, 2000).

From the recent increase in competition in organizations, this has necessitated the need for organizations to adopt modern management strategies (empowerment) to improve productivity. One such strategy is employee

empowerment . The level of communication between employers and their workers affect several areas of business within business environment. In others words employees who are empowered impact positively in organizations compare to un-empowered employees . Empowered employees are thought more likely to want to remain in duty with an organization even in adverse conditions so that the goal of the organization can be achieved. According to Bates et al ..(2003) There is a widely held view that if employees are not happy with their jobs customers will never be uppermost in their minds . Researchers has also shown that employees are a critical prerequisite to the satisfaction of external customers especially in service organizations.

The concept of employee participation has been one of the major focus for research and practice for many years. It has taken many different forms, evolving through the employee involvement and participative decision-making concepts into the contemporary empowerment perspective. The notion of empowerment involves the workforce being provided with a greater degree of flexibility and more freedom to make decisions relating to work. This contrasts markedly with traditional management techniques that have emphasised control, hierarchy and rigidity. The meaning of empowerment has tended to be associated with the concept of power, thereby implying that power is redistributed by those in a senior position to those in more subordinate positions (Tulloch, 1993).

Empowerment has been defined as the process of enabling or authorizing an individual to think, behave, take action, and control work and decision making in autonomous ways. It is the state of feeling confident to take control of one's own destiny (Heathfield, 2007).

The original meaning of empowerment has been referred to as "authorise, give power to" (Tulloch, 1993). The use of the term "power" appears to be common throughout the definitions of empowerment; for example, Legge (1995) has argued that empowerment should be seen in terms of a redistributive model whereby power equalisation is promoted for trust and collaboration. Similarly, Conger and Kanungo (1988) has laid more emphases on power as the central point of empowerment, "either to strengthen this belief or to weaken belief in personal powerlessness". Power is often redistributed by transferring control so that employees have the authority to make and implement their own decisions.

## II. RESEARCH PROBLEM

This study begins from the realization of the need to effectively adopt the employees empowerment system and the effect on organizational performance. Employee empowerment refers to laying down certain powers to the employees working in an organization. Powers in this

context refer to the additional duties and rights entrusted to an employee which is not mentioned in his job description. Empowerment is an organizational approach that allows workers to make minor decisions so as to improve their performance and that of the organization. Overall, employees empowerment impacts on organizational competitiveness, revenue and performance. Unfortunately, the majority of academic institution, private and public institution are not recognizing the importance of junior staff empowerment to increase their employee's productivity and the organizational overall performance . This has in most organization leads to high job turnover ,job dissatisfaction then increase the cost to hiring new employees which low down the organizational profitability. Earlier researches proved that there is a positive link between staff empowerment and organizational performance, as empowerment improves and benefits the employee as well as the organization since it positively enhances employee performance through the enhancement of employee's competencies and behavior. Organizations that focuses on shareholders and customer satisfaction realized the importance of delegating function and giving authorities to employees, thus recognizes the worth of employee empowerment. Keeping above discussion in mind, the significant function of this study is to answer the following research question:

1. Does worker empowerment improves organizational performance
2. To what extent does empowerment increases employees performance
3. Does junior staff empowerment increase organizational performance.

## III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is to ascertain the impact of junior staff empowerment on the organizational performance .Specifically

1. To determine the impact of empowerment on employees innovativeness
2. Examine the influence of empowerment on employees motivation
3. To determine the impact of empowerment on employees performance

## IV. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### *The Concept of Empowerment*

The concept of empowerment surfaced in 1980s (Yong and Choi, 2009) and has received varying degree of attention from diverse discipline within business management especially in human resource management.

Empowerment has been defined as a process of enhancing feeling of self-efficacy among participants (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). Bowen and Lawler (1992) used the term service delivery to capture the concept of employee empowerment. Employee empowerment includes

Despite differences in definitions, there is general agreement among scholars of two distinct theoretical perspectives dominate the study of employee empowerment: situational and psychological perspective (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Bowen and Lawler, 1992; 1995; Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). The situational approach also known as relational (Conger and Kanungo, 1988, Ongori, 2009) or management practice approach (Fernandez and Moldogaziev, 2011) describes how those in power share power and authority with those in lower position (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Bowen and Lawler, 1992; 1995). Bowen and Lawler (1992; 1995) contend that the managerial perspective has its origin in McGregor Theory X and Y with focus being management practices and behaviours aimed at sharing power, information and rewards with employees to improve results.

Critics of the situational approach contend that managers contend with loss of control and fail to address the cognitive state of employees (Yang and Choi, 2009) and that it does not address the nature of empowerment as experienced by employees.

The term empowerment has been defined in relationship to leadership and independence of the employee regarding service encounter and is compared to the opposite approach referred to as the production line method which is the traditional method of delegating authority to subordinates by their superiors (Deal, 2005). According to Looy, Gemmel and Van Dierdonck (2003) "empowerment means providing service employees with enough autonomy to allow them to handle unforeseen problems situations such as complaints". It also refers to employees being more proactive and self-sufficient in assisting an organization to achieve its goal (Herrenkohl, Judson and Heffner, 1999). Empowerment means encouraging people to make decisions with the least intervention from higher management (Handy 1993).

Employee empowerment refers to the allocation and assignment of extra powers to the employees working in an organization. Generally, the employee empowerment was the powers that are not described on their job description. Researchers like Haznain Raza et al., (2015); Suresh D et al., (2015); Muogbo U S et al., (2013); Haleema Zia et al., (2014); and Gaudreau Meyerson et al., (2012) all have conducted experimental studies on the employee engagement. There are even certain review studies such as those conducted by the Linda Honold (1977) and JIJ Wagner et al. (2010) on the Employee engagement concept. There are no case studies conducted on the concept of Employee empowerment.

Autonomy is synonymous with choice dimension of (Thomas and Vethouse, 1990) and refers to the extent to which employees experience substantial freedom and discretion in their work. Autonomy is one of the dimensions of job redesign proposed by Hackman and Oldman (1980) which affect desired outcomes through experiencing control and discretion over work (Jose and Mampilly, 2014). The major essential characteristics of autonomy are the freedom and discretion to make decisions about how to schedule work. Pfeffer (2005) posits that autonomy entails moving from a hierarchical control and coordination system to a system where low level employees given discretion over how to perform their work. The findings reported by Langfred and Moye (2004) and Fernandez and Moldogaziev (2011) draws attention to Choi and Yong (2009) idea that autonomy has an expected outcome of higher motivation, satisfaction and performance.

Empowerment enables the managers to perform and help others working under them to achieve through successful work systems. Ripley and Ripley (1992) and Spatz (2000) stated that empowerment can enhance the responsibilities as well as motivation of employees in their routine work, improve satisfaction level, quality of services, employees' loyalty and productivity. It also gives them a feeling of self respect that is worth a lot and ultimately increases the productivity and quality of products and reduces employee turnover. Gronroos lists the benefits of employee empowerment in service organizations as:

- a) Quicker and more direct response to customer needs
- b) Quicker and more direct response to dissatisfied customers in service recovery
- c) Employees are more satisfied with their jobs and feel better about themselves
- d) Employee will treat customers more enthusiastically
- e) Empowered employees can be a valuable source of new ideas .

Empowered employees are helpful to creating good word of mouth referrals and increasing customer retention.

#### ***Elements of Employees Empowerment***

Fracard (2006) see that employees empowerment contains three elements. Each needs to be present for employees empowerment to be successful.

1. **Style:** Empowered employees have a working style of self management and possess a team spirit. Employees make, implement, and are held accountable for work-related decisions.
2. **Skills:** Empowered employees are trained to have effective problem-solving and communication skills. They challenge inefficient policies and identify problems.
3. **Staff:** Empowered employees are bred in empowering organizations. With empowering leaders as drivers, immersed in a culture of empowerment and reinforced by

empowering management practices, employees are expected to grow.

#### ***Advantages of Employee Empowerment***

According Grace (2016) the following are the significant benefits to employees empowerment provides to the organizations such as:

1. Empowerment makes employees feel that they are vital to the success of the organization. In addition it serves as a vote of confidence in the employee's ability to significantly contribute to the organization objectives. Empowerment places people at the centre of the circle rather than on the fringes. Then in the long run employees would be committed towards achieving the organization objectives. Any change which takes place in organization is effected by employees. Employee Empowerment facilitates the process of change in the organization.
2. Employees Empowerment builds commitment and develops a sense of belonging to the organization. Acceptance and Ownership are basic human needs that are satisfied through the empowerment process in organization (Greasley, et. al., 2005).
3. Empowered people join in creating their own destiny, and their work becomes exciting, stimulating, enjoyable and meaningful (Moye, et al, 2005).
4. Reduce the number of administrative levels in organizational structures, which lead to more effective communication and reduce time decision.
5. Increased focus and attention of senior management strategic issues and leave the day-to-day matters to subordinates.
6. Provides a suitable environment for the implementation of modern management strategies such as Total Quality Management and others (Ongori and Shunda, 2008).
7. Increase employee loyalty, while at the same time reducing turnover, absenteeism, and illness (Ripley and Ripley, 1992; Spatz, 2000).
8. It serves as motivation to the employees, which enables them increase their performance.

#### ***Steps in Employees Empowerment***

According to Grace (2016) the process of Employees Empowerment have several steps:

1. Acquire empowerment. Upper management starts the empowerment process. They must be willing to relinquish authority and decision-making power to lower levels of the organization.
2. Choose employees to empower. Employees must want to be empowered. Some employees are unwilling to accept additional responsibilities and decision-making power regardless of potential rewards. They need skills to make correct decisions and accomplish additional responsibilities.
3. Provide role information. Upper management defines employee's role and assigns responsibilities, authority, and decision making power to meet organization and department goals. It also defines boundaries to clarify

decisions employees will and will not make. Also, specify performance criteria and rewards for outstanding achievement.

4. Share organization information. Blanchard, et al, (1999) see that organization must help employees to understand the need for change, share good and bad information, and view mistakes positively. Explain organization vision and values, clarify priorities, and learn decision-making and problem-solving skills.

5. Provide training to employees. Fracard (2006), see that organization must train new employees. Current employees with experience and knowledge also need training. Training should be continuous because it is a major key to the success of a business.

6. Inspire individual initiatives. An inspired employee is a highly productive resource to organization and department. Bartlett and Ghoshal (1997), posited that organization must build on the belief of the individual a sense of ownership (create small performance units, decentralize resources and responsibilities), develop self-discipline, establish clear standards and expectations, and provide a supportive environment (coaching, openness to challenges, and tolerance for failure (Fracard, 2006).

#### ***Empowerment and Organizational Performance***

Menon (1995) surveyed 311 employees of a corporation to determine the effectiveness of empowerment. His findings among others, were that the greater the empowerment, the higher the internal work motivation and job satisfaction; the lower the job stress, the greater the job involvement and involvement beyond the defined job of the individual and the greater the organizational commitment. Also Spreitzer (1995) surveyed 393 midlevel administrators of Fortune 500 corporations and discovered that empowered employee have little ambiguity about their role in the organization. From these findings, she draw conclusion that leaders in organizations that are empowered have an unlimited control scope, leading to greater autonomy. Lee et al. (2006) survey data on federal employees yielded positive and weak association with employee perception of organizational effectiveness for a period of 30 years.

Yang and Choi (2009) survey of 176 municipal work teams in US on employee empowerment (autonomy, responsibility, information, creativity) and team performance found a significant effect on team performance.

Ibua (2014) findings on employee empowerment, institutional factors and job related attitudes revealed that institutional factors moderated the relationship between employee empowerment and performance. The study revealed that employee empowerment had a significant influence on performance of public universities in Kenya. The study did not take into consideration the effect of control variables on relationship variables.



Most of the studies that relate empowerment and performance use an individual level of analysis, typically focusing on the association between job design and task performance. Little is known of the relationship between job enrichment and organizational performance (Patterson et al, 2004). This is an important omission, as several of the potential benefits of job enrichment may occur at the organizational level. For example, lower costs from a reduction in supervisory, engineering, and other support staff are important at an organizational level of analysis but would not register in a measure of task performance.

More direct support for the importance of empowerment to firm performance is provided by Hitt, Bierman, Shimizu, and Kochhar's (2001) study, who found a positive relationship between human capital (based on intellectual capabilities, knowledge, and social capital) and firm performance in a sample of professional organizations. The literature review suggests that empowerment as part of motivation has been an area of interest for human resource professionals, managers, owners and researchers. Various aspects of empowerment studied in recent years, but there are very few studies conducted on empowerment with a common approach to all organizations on motivating their employees leave alone common empowerment context. On the motivation side there exist several theories with conflicting views. These include need based theories, cognitive theories, drive and reinforcement theories. The majority of literature review emphasizes on the empowerment through two approaches, namely psychological empowerment and climate empowerment.

According to Boussalem. (2015), he studied the relationship between employee empowerment by meaningfulness, autonomy, know-how of the employee and impact on work a performance and excellence, Furthermore Shaid & Shajari (2013) they investigated empowerment of the employees in health organization having identified empowerment factors as serving others, coaching others, mentoring others and, monitoring others as employees.

## V. EMPOWERMENT AND INNOVATIVENESS

Hassan (2015) noted that employee empowerment and innovativeness and similar efforts are of great importance for organizations to be successful in the long term, to enlarge, and to survive. For these reasons, empowerment, apart from being a philosophy which authorizes giving more responsibility and assigning them authority to make decisions, helps to create new research fields, new ideas, products and markets and thus contributes to economic and industrial growth (Al Zahrani, 2012: 7329-7330). The fact that employees, thanks to the efforts of empowerment, participate in management, have the authority to make decisions and to produce new ideas and

that managers attempt to create an organizational culture and environment which will facilitate employees' creativity and innovativeness encourages employees to behave innovatively. In such an environment, the employee will feel empowered and be able to produce new ideas (Köksal, 2011: 68).

Indeed, Spreitzer described innovation as the most important outcome of the psychological empowerment model within which he included locus of control, self-esteem, information-sharing and rewarding (Spreitzer, 1995: 1445).

Employee empowerment not only has a positive impact on employees' efficiency, work satisfaction, quality, and customer satisfaction, but also helps to increase the demand and efforts to create innovation by authorizing employees and increasing their competence (Bolat, 2008: 113-115). According to Kahreh et al, (2011 ) empowering employees' with enough time, education and resource makes a positive impact on the perception of employees' self-sufficiency, work satisfaction, confidence and the meaningfulness of work. The employees having this perception feel themselves more empowered, increase their efficiency and productivity within the organization, and become the source of new ideas and innovation .

## VI. ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

According to Grace (2016) , she stated that Continuous performance is the aim of any organization because only through performance, organizations are able to grow and progress. Knowing the determinants of organizational performance is important, especially in the context of the current economic crises because it enables identification of those factors should treated with an increased interest to improve the organizational performance.

Finally, finding from the literatures reviewed suggest that there is a significant relationship exists between employees empowerment and organizational performance, employee empowerment leads to increases job involvement through increase their contribution in achieving organizational objectives and giving the opportunity to control on their work , and finally their self -determination for work. This finding supports prior research which shows that employees empowerment have a significant impact on Job Involvement (Noorliza and Hasni, 2006).

## VII. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have examined the relationship between employee empowerment and organizational

performance. Based on the result of the findings from the reviewed literatures, employee empowerment has positive and significant impact on the performance of polytechnics. This research confirms that employee empowerment improves quality of service. When Junior staff are highly empowered to deliver quality services to their clients, they feel motivated. This is evident in the assignment of particular employees to specified customers or client, to ensure he / she maintain a direct personal relationship with them. Employees' empowerment should be used by management as one of the strategies in achieving organisation objectives. Employee empowerment creates a high degree of commitment and reduces employee turnover. Organizations should always ensure that employees are involved in decisions which affect their work since it has been identified by scholars as one of the strategies that can be used by management to motivate and retain employees in organisations. In empowering employees in organisations management should consider external environment forces, the strategy of the organisation, the nature of the decision, the attitudes of the employees, the size and the growth rate of the organisation and desire for dependence vis-à-vis interdependence. Also Employees' empowerment emphasizes on accountability. Accountability instils discipline and creates sense of responsibility among employees. Management should ensure to give junior staff some level of trust while encouraging open communication in the organisations.

This research will contribute to the existing literature of employees empowerment, specifically will inspire managers to come up with various interventions on how to retain employees in their organizations by using employees empowerment as one of the tools

## RECOMMENDATION

In order to proffer solution to the research problem we therefore make the following recommendations as follows:

1. Employee empowerment process should be full supported by top management. As witnessed in the literature reviewed, top management support was lacking. There is an urgent need for top management to fully support the process.
2. In quest to introduce or initiate the employees empowerment strategy in the organization, there is need to train employees properly to cope with any changes in macro – environment. Employees who are empowered will make the organization to survive.
3. By management performing empowerment, it can easily achieved organizational goals but this only by improving working conditions, increased job satisfaction and customer satisfaction.

4. Junior staff should be trusted and entrusted with power and authority to perform task. This serves as a motivation to staff since they will feel like boss while carrying the task.
5. Staff training should be introduced and allowed in the organization, since this will improve the employees knowledge on the task.
6. Empowerment should not be selective both a thing for all that is concerned.

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